

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 11, 2014

Dear Secretary Jewell, Administrator McCarthy and Director Burwell:

We write to ask for your help to keep Colorado's Arkansas Valley Conduit on schedule. We are deeply concerned that, for the second year in a row, the Administration has proposed insufficient funding to move this priority project forward. We ask you to work with us, and with Senate and House appropriators, to increase total funding allotted for the project in both 2014 and 2015, in order to ensure that the conduit can move ahead as planned.

Last year, as the Administration was preparing its budget request, we highlighted the importance of this issue to the Department of the Interior. The Arkansas Valley Conduit is a planned 130-mile water-delivery system from the Pueblo Dam to communities throughout the Arkansas River Valley in Southeast Colorado. The conduit is the final phase of the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project, which Congress authorized in 1962. When completed, it will help bring clean drinking water to up to 42 municipalities, towns, and water providers in the lower Arkansas valley.

In Colorado, this issue has taken on a new sense of urgency. Many of the wells in these areas have been contaminated with radon or uranium. Because of federal standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment regulators have raised concern with the current quality of drinking water in the region – and in some cases, cited small, local water providers with non-compliance with these federally set standards. The costs communities face as they implement temporary processes to deliver safe drinking water are daunting, and further waste water discharge violations have resulted because of those processes. Simply put, the status quo isn't sustainable. The Arkansas Valley Conduit, a project that was promised to them over 5 decades ago, is the only long-term solution that makes sense.

The federal government has repeatedly promised to build this conduit. President Obama signed legislation in 2009 committing to fund a substantial share of the project costs. The Bureau of Reclamation has already spent over \$14 million funding detailed planning and feasibility studies, and helping to design and plan the project. President Obama has personally and publically committed to build the conduit. Just last week, the Department of the Interior signed and released a record of decision, finalizing an environmental impact statement for the project. This is a major milestone, and just the latest sign of the federal commitment to completing the journey President Kennedy started half a century ago.

Nevertheless, the budget numbers released for Fiscal Year 2014 and 2015 are troubling. The Bureau of Reclamation budgeted just \$1 million for 2014. Today, the latest budget figure is half that, just \$500,000. Planners tell us they need \$14 million from the Bureau in 2015, at a minimum, to keep the conduit on schedule to at last break ground in 2016. At a time when

planners are trying to scale up significantly and move forward toward the construction stage, the Administration budget figures have threatened to delay work on this critical priority. Coloradans simply can't afford that delay.

While the project will require funding over the next decade, over time, the Bureau of Reclamation will fully recoup these costs through non-federal repayments, a mechanism also approved by Congress.

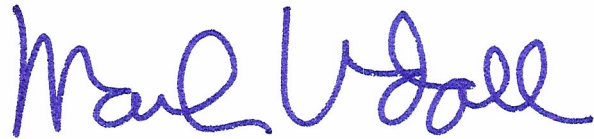
We ask you to work with us and leaders in Colorado to address this urgent funding need. This is a top priority for us this coming year. If we work together, we are confident we can start construction of the conduit on schedule.

Thank you for your consideration.

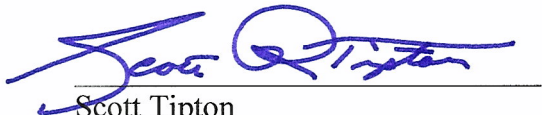
Sincerely,



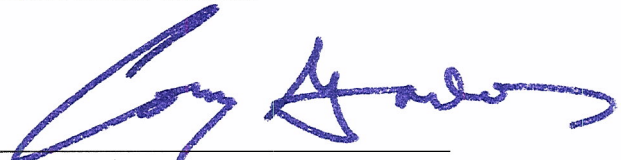
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Mark Udall
United States Senator



Scott Tipton
Member of Congress



Cory Gardner
Member of Congress